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THE DOOM OF THE KATT-A-QUINS.

FROM THE ABORIGINAL FOLK-LORE OF SOUTHERN ALASKA.

THE following story I obtained nearly thirty years ago, while collecting the folk-lore of the South Alaskan tribes. The Stickeens, from whom I had this story, live at the town of Wrangle, near the mouth of the Stickeen, a large river which rises in British Columbia, and after flowing through Alaska falls into the sea at the town above mentioned. *Sticks* is the name for the interior Indians, while *Keen* is the word for water, or river, among the coast Indians; so the term signifies "The people living on the Sticks River." Every summer these coast Indians go up this river to trade, and at the same time lay up their winter stock of salmon; for regularly every season, in order to deposit their spawn, this fish runs up this stream and its tributaries. Not only do they go to fish, but also to meet these Sticks, who bring down their furs in order to trade. Over a hundred miles up this river is a large flat, with considerable open land. On this clearing stood a few houses belonging to the chief of the coast tribes, who, like his fathers, on becoming chief, took the name of Shakes. Consequently the name of this small town was *Shakes-heit*, that is, Shakes-house. At this place most of the trading was done, although the coast tribes often visited the others in their own country.

Several miles below this village was another large flat, on which the wild fruits used by this people grew in unlimited abundance. To this place, during the summer months, they used to come and get a supply of these fruits, which they dried and stored for winter consumption. Along the side of this flat the river ran in a straight line for a quarter of a mile, turning suddenly to the right, on the upper end, and in the same manner to the left at the lower end of the flat. In a line across the flat and the river stood a number of rocks, two large ones and three or four smaller ones. Excepting the two larger ones, which stood in the middle of the river, these stones were near the shore, or on the level ground beyond. The lesser ones were shaped like pillars, while the two larger ones varied a little, and assumed something of a triangular form. These rocks appear so strange that it is impossible for any one to pass up or down the river, by boat or steamer, without wishing to stop in order to examine them closely. A geologist or student of natural history would have little difficulty in solving the problem, and explaining why the rocks stand as they do, like stepping-stones for some giant to cross. He would see that the rock, which on one side forms the

river-bank and bounds the plain, formerly extended across, making a lake above, with a waterfall over this ledge, which by some upheaval, probably, had blocked up the river, forming the above-mentioned lake, in which has been deposited an immense amount of sediment brought from above. By and by, through advancing ages, the river in its downward flow, laden with ice in the spring and with timber and sediment in summer, would wash away this barrier, leaving here and there a few patches of harder rock, which finally, by the continued action of the water, became rounded into their present shape. As a natural consequence, the weakest part of this barrier would give way first, which would drain the lake, and gradually form a new channel for the river, leaving the other portion dry, with its pillar-like rocks. Hence the origin of this large strip of flat land and these strange rocks.

If any person had been on this river, as I was in 1862, and had asked any of the Indians, fishing up and down, how these stones came to be there, the answer would have been: "These stones are Katt-a-quin and his family." If asked who this person was, they would have given the following legend, long preserved among this people, together with many other tales: —

Katt-a-quin was a chief among the Tlingit. He lived very long ago, our fathers tell us, so long that no man can count the time by moons nor by snows, but by generations. He was a bad man, the worst that ever lived among our people. Not only were he himself and his wife bad, but the whole family were like him. They were feared and shunned by every one, even by little children, who would run away screaming when any of the family came near. Nothing seemed to give them so much pleasure as the suffering of other people. Dogs they delighted to torture, and tore their young ones to pieces. Most persons love and fondle a nice, fat little puppy, but not so the Katt-a-quin family; when they got a nice puppy it was soon destroyed by hunger and ill-usage.

When the people met their neighbors from above, at Shakes-heit, if Katt-a-quin came there, he generally spoiled the market, and if he could not get what he wanted by fair means, he would take it by force. The people, seeing this, would pack up and leave. So tired had they grown of the family, that the rest of the tribe had decided to make them all leave the village, or, failing in that, endeavor to get clear of them by some other means. But before doing anything of that sort, they were delivered in a way terrible and unthought of. From old versions of the story, it appears that the people had become so disgusted with the family that when they wished to go hunting, or to gather wild fruit, they would strictly conceal their object and the direction of their journey from those whom they disliked.

One morning, while all were staying at Shakes-heit, they made up their minds to go to the large flat where these rocks stand, and lay in a stock of wild fruits for winter use. So in order that none of the Katt-a-quin might come, they all left early and quietly. When the others got up, which was far from early, as they were a lazy lot, and found that they were left alone, they were displeased at not being asked to go along with the others. After a time they all got into a canoe, and went up the river in order to find the rest, which after a while they did, by finding their canoes hauled up on shore.

After this they also landed, and began to pluck berries; but finding that the people who preceded them had got the best of the fruit, they gave up picking in disgust, and were seated on the shore when the others returned, having, as might be expected, plenty of fine fruit. Seeing that the rest had a fine supply, and they themselves nothing but sour, unripe stuff, they asked for a few, which the others gave them; at the same time saying that they should not be so lazy, as they might also have got their share of good ones. After a while, the old fellow demanded more of the best fruit; this the people flatly refused, saying that the late comers ought to go picking for themselves.

Just then a number of the first party, who had gone in another direction, returned with baskets full of nice, large, and ripe fruit. Seeing this, the whole family of the Katt-a-quins went and demanded the whole; this the others refused, saying they had no idea of toiling all day gathering fruit for such a worthless, lazy set as they were. A scuffle began, which ended in the family upsetting all the fruit, and trampling it under foot in the sand, thus destroying the proceeds of a long and hard day's work.

Seeing all this, the people made a rush, some for their bows and arrows, others arming themselves with whatever came to hand, all determined to wreak vengeance on those who had caused the destruction of their day's labor, and whom all disliked.

Seeing this turn of affairs, and the determination of the people, the offenders knew that their only safety lay in getting aboard their canoe, and going down the river before the others could follow them. This they did, leaving in their hurry one or two of their children behind them. But a new and terrible retribution awaited them. When they reached the middle, Yehl or Yethel, who had been watching their conduct, turned them in an instant to these stones, and placed them where they now stand, to be an eternal warning to evil-doers. The largest one is Katt-a-quin. The next is his wife, and the small stones in the land and in the water, his children. What is seen is only their bodies; their souls, which can never die, went to See-wuck-cow, there to remain for ages, or until such time as they have

made reparation for the evil done while in the body. After this they will ascend to Kee-wuck-cow, a better land. Such was the doom of the Katt-a-quins. As our fathers told the story to us, said the Tlingit, so I tell it to you.

Before finishing this paper, I think it necessary to say a few words on the ancient ideas of these people with regard to the Deity. The Great Spirit, the creator and preserver of all things, in all his works of creation and providence, assumed the form of a raven; whence his name, Yehl or, as some spell it, Yethel. He was ever ready to reward the good, while punishing the wicked. Thus he turned the Katt-a-quins into pillars of stone. What to them was an affliction served as a monition to lead others to spend virtuous lives. After death the spirits of these would be taken directly to a beautiful country above, called by them Kee-wuck-cow, where they lived in happiness. As for the bad, after death the spirit went to a dark and miserable place in the dense primeval forest, where it remained for ages as an atonement for the evil done during life. This condition was known as See-wuck-cow.

James Deans.

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